

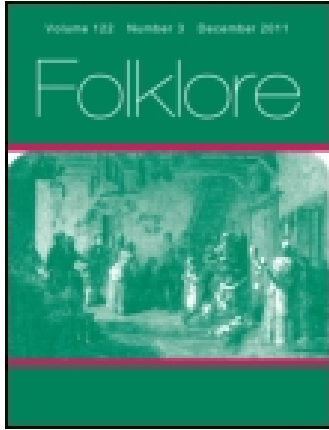
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Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Folklore

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfol20>

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Published online: 30 Jan 2012.

To cite this article: Elizabeth Walsh RSCJ (1975) The King in Disguise, *Folklore*, 86:1, 3-24, DOI: [10.1080/0015587X.1975.9715996](https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.1975.9715996)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.1975.9715996>

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# The King in Disguise

by ELIZABETH WALSH RSCJ

TALES concerning incognito kings abound in the folklore and literature of every people. Variations are many and significant but the nucleus of the typical pattern may be seen in two of the oldest analogues. 'The Lord appeared to Abraham by the terebinths of Mamre.'<sup>1</sup> Abraham received three strangers, entertained them with cakes, milk and curds, and a fine tender calf. His guests then predicted the birth of a son to Abraham and Sarah his wife who was past the age of child-bearing. It is not said that the child was a reward for Abraham's hospitality but the basic elements of the story are clear: the reception of a stranger who is in reality a preeminent figure and some kind of mutual reciprocity. When Odysseus returned to Ithaka he returned in disguise and was given hospitality by Eumaios the swineherd. 'Stranger, I have no right to deny the stranger, not even if one came to me who was meaner than you. All vagabonds and strangers are under Zeus. . .'<sup>2</sup> In this case the stranger was the long-lost, long-sought and dearly beloved master whose absence the faithful servant had lamented for twenty years. The grace of such a visitation was the man's reward but it was only earned through his own fidelity and hospitality. In each case the basic motif is the same: the offer of hospitality to a stranger may somehow result in the fulfilment of one's deepest desires.<sup>3</sup>

Whether such stories as those of Abraham and Odysseus have their root in history or in the natural aspirations of the human mind, in some profound psychological reality, it is difficult to say. They could be amplifications of some dim recollections of historical events; they could be the elaboration of earlier myths and rituals; they could be the faint reminiscences of dreams, such dreams as Dante attested to, which occur in the dawning of the day and presage truth. It is perhaps impossible to draw a clear distinction between fact and fiction, dream and reality. The appearance of the incognito king in historical chronicles, in collections of folklore, and in literary works is a good illustration. It seems possible to

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suggest that this motif is of mixed origin, that it grew out of some factual occurrence which has a peculiar affinity to the aspirations of the human spirit.

An interesting example is the fifteenth-century Scottish romance *The Taill of Rauf Coilyear how he harbrait King Charlis*. A study of the sources and analogues of the poem reveals the universal fascination of the theme of the king-in-disguise as well as the complexity of its origins. The history of the poem itself is somewhat of a mystery. It was printed by Robert Lekpreuik in 1572, at St. Andrews in Scotland. That there was once a manuscript version we know from the index of the Asloan Manuscript (c. 1515), but the leaves of Rauf's story are missing, as are those of the knightly tale of *Sir Golagros and Sir Gawane*, also mentioned in the index. Whatever other manuscript versions of printed editions there may have been, Lekpreuik's is the only one extant. So students of English romance and of Middle Scots have him to thank for preserving a story which might well 'draw children from play and old men from the chimney corner'. It is a charming blend of romance and comedy, an energetic tale of a collier who harbours a king, fights with a Saracen, and is finally 'promoted' to the rank of knight and the position of Marshal of France.

The poem, or at least the story of its hero, was popular in early sixteenth-century Scotland as references to Rauf in Gavin Douglas's *Palace of Honour* (1503) and William Dunbar's short poem 'To the King' (1507?) attest. After the discovery in 1821 of Lekpreuik's edition in the Advocates Library in Edinburgh, the poem was edited the next year in Laing's *Select Remains of Ancient Popular and Romance Poetry*, and has had five other editions since then. A collotype facsimile edition was done by William Beattie in 1966.<sup>4</sup> All of its editors ascribe the poem to the latter part of the fifteenth century. Not only linguistic evidence but the content of the poem seems to support this view. The tale reflects a transitional period both in history and in literature. As T. F. Henderson has commented: it is closer 'to the romantic ballad than the romance proper'.<sup>5</sup> Many romances, perhaps the majority of them, combine elements of folklore with themes of chivalry and aristocratic life: the magic ring in *King Horn* and *Floris and Blanchefleur*, recognition tokens in *Horn*, *Amis and Amiloun*, *Lai Le Fresne*, the theme of the two sworn brothers in *Amis and Amiloun*, the guardian werewolf in

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*William of Palerne* — the catalogue is extensive. But in the older romances these elements are subordinated to the more central themes of love and adventure, loss and recovery. In *Rauf Coilyear* the folklore motif is central. The hero is less than a squire of low degree; he is only a charcoal burner, a seller of coals, and although he manages to live quite comfortably, has strictly no place in the social order of the aristocracy. Thus, the 'popular' element in this romance is uppermost, and the whole is a skilful blend of the popular and the 'artistic'.

Three major elements comprise the background of the tale: (1) the folklore motif of the king-in-disguise aided by a 'humble' man; (2) the metrical and stanzaic form which relates the poem to the fourteenth-century alliterative revival and more particularly to several other Middle Scots poems of the same period as *Rauf*, notably *Golagros and Gawane*, *The Buik of the Howlate*, and *Kynd Kyttoch*;<sup>6</sup> and (3) the 'Matter of France'. It is the purpose of this paper to examine its relationship to the king-in-disguise motif as found in chronicles, other literary works, and collections of popular tales.

The first 777 lines of the 972-line poem consist of an amusing rendition of the traditional story of the incognito king. The poem opens with a description of Charlemagne accompanied by many prelates and princes en route to Paris 'befoir the 3ule tyde' (l. 4).<sup>7</sup> As they ride over the moor (a rather 'Scottish' French landscape), a fierce tempest overtakes them and in the storm Charlemagne becomes separated from his retinue. The king wanders about through the mountains until nightfall and is becoming more and more anxious. Suddenly he comes upon 'ane cant Carll chachand the gait' (l. 42), accosts him and asks his name. It is 'Rauf Coilyear'. Rauf seems somewhat on the defensive with the stranger: he assures the king that he tells the truth; the king replies that he is asking for no trouble; Rauf responds: 'For I trow and it be nocht swa, sumpart salbe thyne' (l. 56). The king asks for lodging; Rauf answers that only his own house 'maist in this land' (l. 68) is fit for such a personage as the stranger seems to be. The king accepts the offer and thanks him warmly. Again the collier is a bit testy: Don't thank me before you know what you're thanking for, says he, and on they ride. When they arrive at the carl's house, he calls imperiously for his wife and demands a hot fire for himself and his

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guest. He sends two lively servants to stable the horses, then proceeds into the house with the king. The collier courteously stands back to allow his guest to enter first; the guest courteously does the same and is chastised angrily. Rauf says:

'... Thow art vncourtes, that sall I warrand.'  
He tyt the King be the nek, twa part in tene.  
(ll. 122-3.)

No man has the right to make another lord of his own!

The king forgets his manners a second time when he demurs at the collier's bidding him to escort the goodwife and begin the board. Again he is reprimanded. The dinner is sumptuous enough: they begin with the brawn of a boar and then consume capons, coneys, wine, venison, and meat pies. In a somewhat boasting manner Rauf confides to his guest that the foresters are perpetually warning him that he will someday be caught for poaching the king's deer and sent to Paris to give an account of his misdeeds to the king himself. Such threats do not deter Rauf who feels it a necessity to have sufficient provisions for himself and his guests. The 'gentill' Charlemagne answers only:

'The King him self hes been fane  
Sum tyme of sic fair.'  
(ll. 205-6.)

After supper they amuse themselves by telling tales and eventually the collier asks his visitor's name. The king identifies himself as Wymond of the Wardrobe and promises Rauf that if he should come to court, he, Wymond, can guarantee a good price for his coals. The king then retires. Rauf's 'middle class prosperity' is indicated by the description of the guest room:

To ane preuie Chalmer belue thay him led,  
Quhair ane burely bed was wrocht in that wane,  
Closit with Courtingis and cumlie cled;  
Of the worthiest wyne wantit thay nane.  
(ll. 263-6.)

The next morning the king sets out after repeating his invitation to Rauf who promises to come to court the next day.

On Christmas morning Rauf, despite his wife Gyliane's foreboding, prepares to take his coals to court. On the way he meets

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Sir Roland whom Charlemagne has sent out to intercept him. The collier insists that he will not be deterred from his journey to seek Wymond of the Wardrobe. His attitude is belligerent, but it is the belligerency of the lowly born who has a certain pride and will assert his rights:

‘Schir Knicht, it is na courtasie commounis to scorne.  
Thair is mony better than I cummis oft to Parys  
That the King wait not of, nouthir nicht nor morne.  
For to townsill me or tit me, thocht foull be my clais,  
Or I be dantit on sic wyse my lyfe salbe lorne.’

(ll. 429–33.)

After some altercation Rauf challenges Roland to a duel; Roland, laughing to himself and realizing that there is no use arguing with the indomitable collier, agrees and allows Rauf to proceed on his way. He finally arrives at court and is duly impressed with its magnificence. Among the courtiers he catches sight of Wymond, now clad in most dazzling apparel. Rauf is filled with misgivings:

‘Allace that I was hider wylit!  
I dreid me sair I be begylit.’

(ll. 709–10.)

The man is petrified. Charlemagne, thoroughly amused, reveals to his nobles his night’s adventures. The knights believe Rauf should be hanged for his rudeness to their ruler, but the king rewards the simple man for his hospitality: he becomes ‘Schir Rauf’ and given sixty squires for his retinue. Thus at line 777 the first part of the poem ends and some scholars think that what has been added is of little value.

The last 200 lines concern Rauf’s duel with a Saracen named Magog. Having left court, he goes to keep his tryst with Sir Roland. But before Roland arrives:

Ane Knicht on ane Cameill come cantly at hand  
With ane curagious countenance and cruell to se.

(ll. 804–5.)

Although the man does seem larger than the knight he had encountered the day before, Rauf challenges him and they begin to fight. When his opponent swears by Mahoun, Rauf realizes he is a Saracen and fights all the more keenly. Sir Roland makes his

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appearance and urges the heathen to convert to the true faith. Magog does finally decide to accept the Christian God, having been promised not only forgiveness of his sins but wealth and a worthy wife. All return to court; Magog receives baptism and the Duchess Jane as bride; Rauf becomes Marshal of France, sends for Gylane, and establishes a hostel in honour of St Julian on the spot where he first met Charlemagne.

The charm of the story lies in the depiction of the collier's personality. He is independent, proud, strongly self-assertive, a lord in his own world, fearless in confronting strangers who might question or threaten his superiority. Yet confronted by those whom he does recognize as his betters: i.e., the king himself, he quickly abandons his pretensions, becoming timid and even fearful. At the root of the king-in-disguise motif is the ironic perception of the incongruities and inconsistencies of life in this world.

How 'original' was the author of the Middle Scots poem? To answer this question it will be well first to consider *Rauf* in relation to other versions of the motif.

The motif of the incognito king given hospitality by a man of low rank seems to have been a universal one in the early and late Middle Ages. The theme is sometimes combined with a 'courtesy lesson' of some sort and in almost every case the humble person is later rewarded by his guest. For purposes of discussion and organization versions of the tale have been divided into accounts found in historical writings, artistically executed versions in romance and ballad, and brief tales found in collections of popular stories, usually anonymous.

Perhaps the earliest<sup>8</sup> and probably the most famous analogue to Rauf's adventure is found in the story of 'Alfred and the Cakes', the authenticity of which is questionable. The earliest version of this tale is in the *Annals of St Neots* which assert that the event was related in a *Vita Sancti Neoti* not now extant. However, in a twelfth-century account of the life of St Neot the two verses about the king do also occur. Archbishop Parker, struck by the similarity between the *Annals* and Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, written in 893,<sup>9</sup> freely interpolated the story into his edition of the latter. Thus, although Asser's original account does not contain the tale, its existence in other annals gives it some degree of credibility.

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Parker inserts the story into Alfred's life in the account for the year 878, a year in which Alfred, in a territory occupied chiefly by Danes and Christians under Danish rule, was leading a rather uncomfortable life with his men. One day the king was at the cottage of one of his cowherds. While the peasant's wife was preparing bread and Alfred sharpening his bows and arrows, the cakes were allowed to burn. Unaware of the king's identity, the good woman scolded him sharply:

'Heus homo  
urere, quos cernis, panes gyrare moraris  
cum nimium guades hos manducare calentes!<sup>10</sup>

Hey man, do you see the cakes burn which you delay  
to turn — and you'll be all too eager to eat them  
when they're cooked!

Another early version of the king-in-disguise motif occurs in the *Antapodosis* of Liutprand of Cremona (?922–?972).<sup>11</sup> Although only an analogue to the tale under consideration it is worth mentioning briefly as it illustrates the universality of the motif. In the entry for the years 866–912 Liutprand recounts an incident in the life of Leo, Emperor of Rome. In order to test the fidelity of his watchmen the emperor disguised himself and went about the city one night. According to the law the city guards should have arrested the stranger. The emperor succeeded in bribing the first two watches, but the third had him imprisoned. In prison the emperor revealed his identity to the jailer who refused to believe him. Finally, however, the man is persuaded to accompany his prisoner to court where he soon realized that he was indeed the emperor. In the morning the emperor sent for the guards; the lax watchmen were banished; the faithful one rewarded.

Another 'historical' account is found in *Heimskringla*.<sup>12</sup> The courtesy lesson is quite explicit in an incident told by Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) in his saga of Harald Hardrada (1047–1066). After the Battle of Nissa which occurred on 9 August, 1062 King Svein of Denmark, defeated by King Harald and the Danes, disguises himself and seeks aid from Earl Hakon, a Dane who had remained behind while King Harald pursued the enemy. Hakon

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sends the stranger ('Vandrath': One who is in trouble) to Farmer Karl with orders that Karl should receive the stranger and give him a horse. Karl welcomes Vandrath and those accompanying him and offers them supper. Before eating the men wash their hands and dry them on the towel provided. Vandrath, the last to dry his hands, does so in the middle of the towel. For this he is severely reprimanded by Karl's wife: 'You have no manners. It is boorish to wet all the towel.'<sup>13</sup> The next winter King Svein, residing in Denmark, sends men north to Halland (now Sweden) to fetch Karl and his wife. Asked by the king whether they had met before Karl answers that he had seen him before: he recognized him then as now. In return for his hospitality and help King Svein rewards the farmer with an estate in Seeland — and — a more amenable wife!

Giraldus Cambrensis (1147-1220) also furnishes us with a story of an incognito king, this time the Plantagenet King Henry II (1133-1189).<sup>14</sup> J. S. Brewer asserts that this tale 'can hardly be considered as anything more than an amusing and popular fiction'.<sup>15</sup> Its insertion is probably meant to place both Henry and the monks in an unfavourable light; however, it does illustrate the popularity of the motif. Many elements in this story occur in later versions.

One day while out hunting Henry II loses his way and becomes separated from his companions. Coming upon a monastery he seeks lodging for the night there and is welcomed by the monks who do not recognize him as their king. He passes himself off as one of the king's courtiers. The abbot asks for his help in some business which he has at court; the 'courtier' promises aid and they spend the night carousing. Their drinking is punctuated with shouts of 'Pril' and 'Wril' instead of the usual 'Wesheil' and 'Drincheil'. The next morning the king returns to court and receives the abbot warmly. After the conclusion of the business Henry invites the abbot to dine. The latter does not recognize the king until he raises a golden cup and says: 'Abbas pater, dico tibi, Pril.' Thrown into confusion, the abbot begs the king's pardon. The gracious Henry assures the monk that he desires only to return the monastic hospitality. The nobles and monks continue drinking together, shouting 'Pril' and 'Wril'. Giraldus goes on to point out that the story illustrates the degeneracy of monastic houses, a common theme with Giraldus who disliked monks.

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These anecdotes, inserted into historical records, cannot be thought of as direct sources of *Rauf the Coilyear*, but they do provide some fine examples of the motif which forms the basis of the story. In the ensuing centuries, the fourteenth and fifteenth, the motif of the king-in-disguise became the central theme of several romances and of a number of ballads which can be directly related to *Rauf*. Four in particular contain elements similar to those in the Scottish romance: 'King Edward and the Shepherd', 'The Kyng and the Hermit', 'John the Reeve', and 'The King and the Miller'.

'King Edward and the Shepherd' is a metrical romance written in the northern dialect probably towards the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The editors point out that the poem must have been intended for an audience familiar with the life of Edward III. Such listeners would catch the humour of the incognito king's allusion to his birth at Windsor (l. 43),<sup>17</sup> (the same town in which the shepherd he meets was born) and his assertion that:

'My fadur was a Walshe kny3t;  
Dame Isabell my modur hy3t,  
For sothe as i tell the!  
(ll. 97-9.)

Notes on this text explain that Edward II was born at Carnarvon, Wales; tradition attests that he had been presented to the Welsh as their king. Moreover, the queen of Edward II was Isabella of France. Historical allusions may also be found in the shepherd's grievance that he is 'so pyllled with þe Kyng/ þat i most fle fro my wonyng' (ll. 31-2). A letter written to Edward III c. 1333 makes a similar complaint:

. . . the harbingers of your court, and various grooms and servants, take many goods by violence from their owners, bread, beer, eggs, poultry, beans, peas, oats, . . .<sup>18</sup>

The story is as follows.

The king, identifying himself as a merchant, meets a shepherd named Adam. Adam complains that the king's men abuse the farmers and shepherds of the country; they have taken his cattle giving him but a tally stick as promise of payment; they have even molested his daughter. Having found the 'merchant', who calls

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himself Jolly Robin, a friendly man who claims to have a son at court with the queen, Adam invites him to his home to dine. On the way the king urges Adam to shoot a rabbit, but the shepherd is appalled at the idea of poaching on the king's game. At Adam's house they dine on various kinds of fowl: pheasant, curlews, mallard, bitterns, swan, then play a drinking game. The king is taught to say 'passilodim'; Adam responds with 'berafrynde'. Eventually, Adam produces a variety of game for their repast: rabbits, hart, roe, venison, and reveals to Jolly Robin his store of excellent wines. They leave the house and as they pass through the forest the king again tempts Adam to shoot some rabbits. This time he does not hesitate and shoots three. The king takes his leave and proceeds to court. The next day Adam follows since his new friend has promised to use his influence to force the king's men to give Adam his due. At court the king and his attendants amuse themselves at the shepherd's expense; he is, indeed, a rustic, and quite out of place in the lavish surroundings. Finally Jolly Robin reveals his identity. Adam is terrified, doffs his hat, and begs the king's mercy. Although the version in the Cambridge MS is unfinished, one may assume that, as in other versions of the motif, Adam's hospitality receives a royal reward.

As in the story of the collier the charm of the tale lies in the characterization of Adam as a simple, outspoken peasant who is not quite so innocent as he appears to be. The irony of his pretensions — both to innocence and to lordliness — in the face of the genial king who is quite aware of the truth — creates an amusing comedy. At several points the narrator remarks that the shepherd does not doff his hat to the merchant; he keeps a good board; indeed, he is master of his own world. Yet he is also the victim of injustice and seems to have no way to defend his rights. Exposed at court he is discomfited and embarrassed. The interest of the story lies in its presentation of two worlds: the world of court, the world of the peasant — and the interaction between these worlds which moves in several directions at once. The tale is a combination of pathos and comedy, but since Adam is rewarded at the end the over-riding tone is the comic. Adam is the antecedent of Rauf, but he lacks the supreme self-assurance, the swaggering confidence of the Scottish Frenchman.

'The King and the Hermit' offers a close parallel to the preceding.

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This tale, reprinted by Hartshorne in *Ancient Metrical Tales*, by W. Carew Hazlitt in 1864, and by A. Kurz in 1905, is a fragment from Bodleian MS Ashmole 61 (designated 6922 by Hartshorne and Hazlitt), a manuscript dated c. 1450.<sup>19</sup> The poem is written in the same stanzaic form as 'King Edward and the Shepherd': twelve line tail rhyme stanzas composed of rhyming iambic tetrameter couplets alternating with a trimeter 'tail' line. The wandering king is again 'god Edwerd,' this time having lost his way while hunting. He seeks lodging with a hermit who is at first reluctant to receive him. The comedy centres again on the poaching of the king's game by his subjects: at first the hermit serves his guest bread and cheese, but after some conversation, decides to share his hidden fare. He then produces white bread and venison; he and the king play the traditional drinking game, this time with a different formula. When the visitor cannot remember his line, 'stryke pantnere', he is scolded by the hermit. This they continue through the night and the next morning the king leaves, having invited the friar to come to court where he, Jhake Flecher, will see that his hospitality is returned. The friar's visit to court is, unfortunately, missing from the manuscript. The relationship between the hermit and the king is sketched in an amusing fashion, but the hermit's familiarity with his royal guest is in low key in comparison with the handling of this theme in 'John the Reeve'.

'John the Reeve' is a fifteenth-century lay or romantic ballad depicting the encounter between Edward I and John the Reeve.<sup>20</sup> The story is preserved in the famous manuscript saved from destruction in 1769 by Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore, and since named the Bishop Percy Folio Manuscript, B.M. Additional 27879. The manuscript is a compilation of romances, lays, and ballads copied, according to F. J. Furnivall, c. 1650, although Sir Frederic Madden placed the handwriting as after 1650.<sup>21</sup> The 'book' contains a similar tale in that of Henry II and the Miller of Mansfield which will be discussed subsequently.

'John the Reeve' is written in six line tail rhyme stanzas, iambic tetrameter lines alternating with a trimeter 'tail'. An allusion in the poem to the fact that there had been to date three kings by the name of Edward makes it fairly safe to conjecture that it was composed sometime between the death of Edward III in 1377 and the accession of Edward IV in 1461. Hales and Furnivall state that it

was probably written toward the end of this period; H. M. Smyser places it in the early fifteenth century.<sup>23</sup> That it was thought of as a companion piece to *Rauf the Coilyear* we know from references to Douglas and Dunbar in which the two names are coupled. Certainly the two poems contain numerous elements in common, but whether 'John the Reeve' is a direct source of the Middle Scots romance, as Smyser asserts, is, I believe, questionable. This problem will be discussed later.

The story is briefly as follows. King Edward, along with a bishop and an earl, becomes separated from his companions while out hunting. The weather is bad; it is night; the way is 'wilsome'. They meet a churl and ask his help but he is suspicious and wants nothing to do with nobility. Although he swears he can offer them nothing but salt bacon, sour ale, and cold beef, they finally prevail upon him to give them lodging. The man warns them to be grateful for what he gives them; if not, he and his neighbours will have at them. His home, however, belies his assertions of poverty: four servants come out to attend the visitors; his wife appears in silk kerchiefs. The visitors identify themselves as members of the king's household; Edward is pointed out as the queen's chief falconer. Although John repeatedly asserts his humble condition, he also asserts his pride and independence. Should any man wrong him, he, John, will make him regret it. He will fight 'hand to hand' (l. 304).

A supper is prepared which John's daughters and his neighbours come to share. John bids the Falconer to begin the board and invites the nobles to sit at the high table with his own daughters. When a simple meal of bean bread and salt bacon is brought in, the Falconer demands better provision. Assured that the nobles will not reveal his opulence to the king, John orders a feast: white and red wine, boar's head, capons, woodcocks, venison, swans, coney, curlews, heron and other delectables. A variation of the courtesy lesson occurs when John rebukes his guests for speaking Latin in his presence. There is no drinking game, but after dining John and his friends dance. The dance includes a kicking game and John enjoys himself immensely by hitting 'the king over the shinnes' (l. 546); the latter also enjoys the fun.

After his return to court the king tells the queen of his adventures and they decide to send for John. This last part of the ballad con-

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tains several amusing scenes. The fearful John dresses and arms himself with pitchfork and sword, takes a last (and long) drink with his friends, and sets out. At court he is obstreperous, attacks the Porter with his pitchfork, rides into the hall and frightens the queen. He finally learns that the Falconer is really the king who knights him and rewards him for his hospitality.

John and Rauf have many traits of personality in common. It is no wonder that Gavin Douglas described the two together:

I saw Raf Coilezar with his thrawin brow  
Craibit Iohne the Reif *and* auld Cowkewyis sow  
(ll. 1711-12.)<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless the extent to which the two poems can be directly related to one another is debatable and scholarly minds are not in agreement on the question. Professor Smyser, in his article '*The Taill of Rauf Coilyear and its Sources*', cites particularly the details of 'the luxurious domestic life of the "humbler subject" '<sup>24</sup> as proving a direct relationship between *Rauf* and 'John the Reeve'. Moreover a form of courtesy lesson is also present in both; in both the subject asks the king to begin the board; in the final parts of both the humble personage arms himself and quarrels with a person attached to the court: Rauf, Sir Roland and John, the Porter. (The latter is, indeed, no striking similarity as the challenge of a porter is a common enough situation and Roland is hardly to be equated with a doorkeeper.) Despite the similarities which do exist and despite the fact that the author of *Rauf* was possibly familiar with the tale of the Reeve, when one considers the presence of these elements in other variations of the tale, one hesitates to accept the conclusion that "John the Reeve" is the source of all material common to both poems, . . .'<sup>25</sup> In addition, William H. Browne asserts that:

the language (as we have it in the Percy MS.) is midland, and much later than that of *Rauf Coilyear*. If originally Scottish — which is unlikely, for a Scottish poet would hardly have represented Edward I in a gracious light — it has been much changed by the scribes.<sup>26</sup>

Professor Smyser's theory is also at variance with the conclusions drawn by Dr M. Tonndorf. In the introduction to his edition of *Rauf* Dr Tonndorf states that of all the English variations of the

motif 'King Henry II and the Miller of Mansfield' is closest to *Rauf*, but there is demonstrably no direct relationship between that tale and *Rauf* nor between *Rauf* and 'John the Reeve'.<sup>27</sup>

Although the tale of Henry II and the Miller of Mansfield<sup>28</sup> concerns a twelfth-century king, there seems to be no trace of it until the end of Elizabeth's reign or the beginning of that of James I (c. 1603). As a written source then, it has no bearing on *Rauf*. Indeed, perhaps the converse may hold true. However, since these tales were popular history and no doubt current long before they were written down,<sup>29</sup> a glance at this version may not be irrelevant to this study. The skeletal elements of the story are these.

King Henry loses his way while hunting; he meets a miller, John Cockle by name, who suspects him of being a thief but finally consents to give him lodging. The miller and his wife decide that their guest seems sufficiently well-bred to sleep with their son Richard. The latter speaks rather vulgarly to the king, asking if he has any diseases. A simple supper of hot bag puddings, apple pies, and ale is first presented; then venison is brought forward. The venison is from the king's preserve in Sherwood; the miller requests his visitor not to betray him. The next morning as the king prepares to leave the miller's, members of the court arrive searching for their sovereign and reveal his identity. The miller is terrified when he learns whom he has harboured; the king knights the miller. After returning to Westminster Henry sends for the miller. Some discussion ensues between the miller and his wife concerning the suitability of his wardrobe. Finally the miller and Richard go to the palace where the king feasts them, offers Richard any lady of the court as a wife and makes Sir John Cockle overseer of Sherwood Forest.

Thus all five of these romances and/or ballads follow a similar pattern. Adam the Shepherd, the hermit, *Rauf* the Collier, John the Reeve, John Cockle the Miller — all represent a lower class on the upward bound. All except John the Reeve, who seems to have his own resources, supply themselves freely from the king's preserves. All are seemingly humble subjects, somewhat suspicious of the aristocracy. All are masters in their own domains yet fearful in the presence of acknowledged royalty. In each case the king is genial, benevolent, magnanimous. Yet though the pattern is the same each of these citizens has his own unique personality and

this seems to argue a distinctive skill on the part of each author who is able to take a well-known tale and fashion a new story from it. Many other stories of English kings in disguise may be cited, but these are either analogous versions or later tales and so can only be thought of as remotely relative to the background of *Rauf* although representatives of the dominant motif which forms the core of the romance.

European and oriental analogues also abound. An interesting one in Scandinavian literature can be seen in Þorsteins Pattr austfirðings.<sup>30</sup> In this tale Þorsteinn meets King Magnús the Good (d. 1047) and saves his life. The king identifies himself as 'Styrbjörn', a retainer at court. Þorsteinn accepts the stranger's invitation to visit the court and arrives there some time later. Like Rauf Coilyear Þorsteinn asks for his friend 'Styrbjörn' and like Adam the shepherd the young Icelander is mocked by the courtiers. Magnús himself leads the young man into the hall, welcomes him, and presents him with gifts. Þorsteinn refuses the offer of a wife and position in Norway, choosing to return to Iceland where he is honoured as a fortunate man.

Stories of incognito kings may also be found in the medieval collections of the *Gesta Romanorum*, the Renaissance collection of tales *Le Novelle Antiche*, the *Novelle* of Matteo Bandello, and in later collections of European and oriental folktales. Of these latter two bear a marked resemblance to our story although they both concern emperors of the sixteenth century. Because of the similarity to the situation in *Rauf* I will mention them here briefly.

'Der Köhler und Kaiser Maximilian II'<sup>31</sup> (1564-76) is the story of the emperor's meeting with a poor collier. The emperor had not gone astray while hunting but was taking a walk through the forest. When the collier asks the stranger's name the emperor tells him but the poor man mispronounces it and calls him Herr Marzipan. The emperor and the collier share the latter's dumplings which Maximilian finds distasteful to his palate. Upon leaving, he invites the collier to visit him when he comes to the city. The collier goes looking for Marzipan and is conducted to the palace. The peasant's simplicity is amusing. He is far from being terrified but is duly impressed by the quality of the surroundings. The emperor offers him a royal repast which the collier is pleased to find more tasty than his dumplings. Finally Maximilian rewards

him and invites him to live at court. Eventually the collier, unhappy with his life of leisure at court, assumes the responsibility of the royal gardens and so spends his days in content.

A collection of Belgian legends contains a number of tales concerning Emperor Charles V (1519-56). The story of the emperor and the broommaker is similar to many of the English stories discussed above.<sup>32</sup> While hunting the emperor becomes lost and seeks hospitality from a broommaker and his wife. Disappointed with their homely fare he asks for a better meal. At this his host and hostess blush violently and promise to provide such if he will not reveal their secret to the king. Then they produce a roasted hart. The next day the emperor summons the broommaker to court. Like his English prototypes the man is terrified but he is also angry, for he surmises that his guest has betrayed him. When he sees the emperor he threatens him with his fist. However, when he learns the identity of his visitor he falls to his knees. The kindly emperor wishes only to reward him. The peasant's sole desire is to have the freedom to gather the wood he needs for his brooms. Charles grants this readily and invites the man to return to sell his brooms at court. The vivacious and self-assertive spirit of the broommaker recalls that of Adam, John the Reeve, and Rauf. It is interesting to note, however, that in neither of these European versions is the peasant raised to a higher rank in society. The *Deutsche Sagen* of the Grimm Brothers also contain a story of a prince lost while hunting and entertained by a collier but the other details of the story differ greatly.<sup>33</sup>

The stories of Maximilian and Charles V led Professor Smyser to posit the existence of an earlier European folktale known to the Scottish poet in literary form and used by him, along with 'John the Reeve', as a direct source for *Rauf*.<sup>34</sup> This is an interesting and plausible hypothesis but it remains conjectural. Because Rauf's incognito king is Charlemagne both Janet Smith and Professor Smyser suggest that there may have been a continental folktale about Charlemagne as a king-in-disguise which may have been the source of both *Rauf* and the story of Charles V outlined above.<sup>35</sup> In the introduction to his edition of *Rauf* F. J. Amours attests to the existence of a French legend concerning Francis I which has survived in a proverb still in common use — 'Charbonnier est maître chez soi,' — Francis I being the accepted hero of the adventure

in the charcoal burner's house, as explained under the word 'Charbonnier' in Littré's Dictionary, with a quotation in support of the explanation taken from Montluc's Memoirs. If this is not, and it can hardly be, a coincidence, our Scottish 'makar' becomes an authority on the age of a popular French saying, for Francis I was not born when 'Rauf Coilgear' was written, and the phrase must be older than has hitherto been believed.<sup>36</sup>

Another legend concerning Francis I and a shoemaker is recorded by Paul-Yves Sébillot. This tale contains several elements common to the English stories already discussed. It seems that the king, 'le Grand Nez', often went about disguised as one of the people. One day he goes astray in the forest and seeks lodging at the home of a shoemaker. The man receives the king warning him that he is not a wealthy man but is, nevertheless, willing to share with the stranger some of the rabbit which he had caught that morning. The guest reminds the peasant that such hunting is strictly forbidden; at this the shoemaker expresses his confidence that his guest will not betray him to the king. Some time later the king summons his former host to the palace and recompenses his hospitality by making him one of his leading subjects.<sup>37</sup>

An incident involving a duke and a *charbonnier* is related in *L'Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne*.<sup>38</sup> One day in 1458 Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy (b. 1396, d. 1467), angered by a quarrel with his son, leaves the palace and rides off hunting to dispel his ill humour. For some time he rides in the forest of Sogne but is finally compelled by the cold to seek some shelter. Coming to the cabin of a coal burner, he seeks his help. The latter warms his guest and does what he can to entertain him but, seeing that this is a figure of some nobility and wealth, takes him to a hunter who can offer him better hospitality. The hunter recognizes the Duke and sends word to the court of his whereabouts. The members of the Duke's household, greatly relieved, come 'en foule' to lead him home.

Yet, no such legend concerning Charlemagne is known to exist.<sup>39</sup> The problem of the origin of the Scottish Romance remains.

Certain elements in the tale as it is preserved for us would seem to indicate that it originated in an oral tradition which some 'makar' eventually took upon himself to write down and cast in the alliterative stanza popular at the time. Understood in this way the poem becomes an example of the process by which popular litera-

ture becomes art. As Kenneth W. Clarke has asserted: '... art literature is a complex rendition of selected motifs of popular literature, ... popular literature is a complex rendition of selected motifs of folk literature ...'<sup>40</sup>

The hallmark of oral tradition is the formula. In its broadest application the 'formula' may be a stock situation, a proverb, an episode, phrase or epithet repeated — with exact correspondence or slight variation — a stock phrase or 'alliterative tag' as they are sometimes called, rhyme tags. Such devices, the possession of a community and easily tucked into memory, are characteristic of the singer of tales.<sup>41</sup> *The Tail of Rauf Coilyear* is compounded of such elements.

The two central episodes of the plot are stock situations: the incognito king and the encounter with a Saracen who is first mistaken for Sir Roland (a humorous variation of this situation occurs in *Sir Perceval of Galles* when Perceval, in search of the Sultan, mistakes Wawayne for the enemy and actually does battle with him, ll. 1429 ff.). The courtesy lesson (repeated once) and the 'porter scene' are also conventional situations. The king's exclamation: 'For first to lofe and syne to lak, Peter! it is a schame' (l. 87) is a variation of a proverbial expression: 'Lack (blame) not where you have loved (praised)'.<sup>42</sup> The collier's admonition 'kynd aucht to creip' (l. 126) is a truncated proverb: 'Kind (nature) will creep where it may not walk'.<sup>43</sup> Another proverbial expression is 'be buikes and bellis' (l. 533). The altercation between Rauf and Roland is repeated twice (424 ff. and 486 ff.). The phrase 'wicket wedderis' occurs in lines 21, 36, 106, 283 with the variation 'ithand wedderis' in line 27. The phrase 'blyith cheir' is repeated in lines 192, 216, 407, 840 with the variation 'gude cheir' in lines 178 and 348. The phrase 'Ryall array' is repeated thrice: lines 480, 550, 792. With the consistency of an epithet the collier is described 'with ane Capill and twa creillis' in lines 43, 365, 382, 418, and 614. When Sir Roland meets Charlemagne for whom the courtiers had been anxiously searching, his kneeling is mentioned twice:

He kneillit down in the place, (333)

The gentill Knicht Schir Rolland, he kneilit on his kne, (337).

Other alliterative tags and stock phrases ('on ground', 'on stray' 'holtis hair') might be enumerated but the above mentioned

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elements seem sufficient illustration that the poem grew out of some oral tradition. This is not to say that the version printed by Lekpreuik was an oral composition but the linguistic evidence does seem to warrant the conjecture that the poem, or at least its episodes, belonged to the corpus of popular literature and that some poet, probably in the late-fifteenth century, transformed the material, retaining many remnants of the oral mode, into a literary composition.

As has been seen in the foregoing discussion of the analogues of *Rauf Coilyear* the king-in-disguise was a popular motif. Considering the relationship between Scotland and France in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it would have been natural for the ingenuity of a Scottish poet to combine elements of a popular tale with deference to the great symbol of French sovereignty, Charlemagne himself.

One interesting corollary of the study of a universal motif is to note the different twists given the story by men of different ages and cultures. This has already been remarked in the different emphasis given various aspects of the story in English and continental analogues. In the Bible the stranger was the Lord Himself, in Greek epic one to be welcomed as a person especially protected by the gods. The medieval tales we have considered reflect social and political concerns. Earlier versions focused on the exalted position of the sovereign; later English versions gave consideration to the uniqueness and individuality of the common man; continental versions again exalted the king.

The story was popular in oriental folklore as well. Some of the stories which I have gathered focus more on the underlying moral. A story from Kashmir concerning the Sultan of Ghazni is an instruction on divine providence.<sup>44</sup> The emphasis in Natesa Sastri's *Indian Folktales* is on the value of a virtuous life seen especially in kindness and generosity to the poor.<sup>45</sup>

In the final analysis, however, in whatever way the versions differ from one another, the basic motif is the same. The identity of the stranger may be unknown but neither can one calculate the reward of hospitality. Indeed, Christ made this the very criterion for entry into the Kingdom of Heaven:

... come, enter and possess the kingdom that has been  
ready for you since the world was made. For when I was

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hungry, you gave me food; when thirsty, you gave me drink;  
when I was a stranger you took me into your home, . . .  
(Mt. 25: 34-6).

Or was he too simply reiterating a twice-told tale?

## NOTES

1. Genesis 18: 1 ff. *The New English Bible* (Oxford-Cambridge, 1970). Reference to the Hebrew clarifies the meaning of the passage. Abraham, evidently recognizing one of the strangers as the leader, addresses him as 'my lord' (v. 3). It is not until v. 13 that the notation for Yahweh is used. Hence, Abraham was at first unaware of the identity of his guests. The use of the word for Yahweh in verse 1 'is the author's aside to the reader who is thus prepared at the outset for the surprise that is in store for Abraham'. The Anchor Bible edition of *Genesis*, intro., trans. E. A. Speiser, pp. 129-31.
2. Book XIV, ll. 56-8, *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (New York, 1967).
3. This is related to Jung's archetype of the Spirit, a projection of one's own personality embodied in myth and fairytale as a wise old man or counsellor who appears at a critical moment to lead the protagonist to a resolution of difficulties and ultimately to the realization of his individual destiny. C. J. Jung, 'The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales', *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, 1969), pp. 210 ff.
4. *Select Remains of Ancient Popular and Romance Poetry*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh, 1822), rev. John Small (Edinburgh, 1885).  
*Scottish Alliterative Poems*, ed. F. J. Amours, STS (Edinburgh, 1897).  
*The Taill of Rauf Coilyear with the Fragments of Roland and Vernagu and Otuel*, ed. Sidney J. H. Herrtage, EETS (London, 1882).  
*The Taill of Rauf Coilyear*, ed. Dr M. Tonndorf (Berlin, 1894).  
*The Taill of Rauf Coilyear*, ed. William Hand Browne (Baltimore, 1903).  
*The Taill of Rauf Coilyear*, facsimile edition, intro. William Beattie (Edinburgh, 1966).
5. T. F. Henderson, *Scottish Vernacular Literature* (Edinburgh, 1910).
6. The poem is also related in stanzaic form to *The Awntyrs of Arthure*, a romance included by Amours in his edition of the Scottish alliterative poems.
7. Quotations have been cited in accordance with the text which I have transcribed from the original printed text in the National Library of Edinburgh from the facsimile copy of Professor Beattie.
8. An earlier tale of the hospitality-reward motif is to be found in *Silva Gadelica, a Collection of Tales in Irish*, ed. Standish H. O'Grady (London, 1892), II, pp. 437-40. The annal for the year 675 relates a tale of a poor man who is visited by the king of 'fir Rois' (men of Ross). Finnachta gives hospitality to the king and his company and is later rewarded but the king is not disguised or unrecognized.
9. Asser, *Life of King Alfred, with the Annals of St Neots*, ed. William Henry Stevenson (Oxford, 1904).
10. Asser, p. 41.
11. Liutprand of Cremona, 'Antapodosis', *Opera Omnia ex Monumentis Germania Historici Recusa* (Hanover, 1877), I, ch. xi.
12. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, trans. Lee M. Hollander (Austin, Texas 1964), cc. 64-7.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 630.
14. Giraldus Cambrensis, *Opera*, ed. J. S. Brewer et al. (London, 1861-91), IV, pp. 213-15.

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15. *Ibid.*, p. xxxix.
16. 'King Edward and the Shepherd', *Middle English Metrical Romances*, ed. Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale (New York, 1930; reissued in 2 vols. 1964). II, pp. 949-85.
17. Edward II was born at Windsor on 13 November, 1312. In *The Regiment of Princes* (1411-12) Thomas Hoccleve reports that Edward III often went about in disguise, thus showing at least that the legend was widespread:  
O worthi king! benyngne Edward þe laste!  
Thow haddist ofte in herte a drede impressed,  
Whiche at þyn humble goost ful sore a-gaste;  
And to know if þou cursed were or blessid,  
A-mong þe peple ofte hastow þe dressed  
In-to contre, in symple array alone,  
To here what men seide of þi persone.
- Hoccleve's Works*, ed. Sir Israel Gollancz and Frederick J. Furnivall, *EETS* (London, 1892-1925), III, p. 93, ll. 2556-62.
18. Taken from the letters addressed to Edward III, probably by Archbishop Simon Meopham, before 1333, in *Illustrations of Chaucer's England*, ed. Dorothy Hughes (London, New York, etc., 1918), p. 173.
19. *Ancient Metrical Tales*, ed. Charles Henry Hartshorne (London, 1829), pp. 293-315. The *MED Bibliography* dates it simply ante 1500.
20. *Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances*, ed. John W. Hales and Frederick J. Furnivall (London, 1868), II, pp. 550-94.
21. *Ibid.*, I, pp. xii-xiii.
22. H. M. Smyser, 'The Taill of Rauf Coilyear and its Sources', *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, XIV (Cambridge, 1932), 138.
23. Gavin Douglas, 'The palice of Honour', *The Shorter Poems of Gavin Douglas*, ed. Priscilla J. Bawcutt, *STS* (Edinburgh, 1967).
24. Smyser, 139.
25. *Ibid.*, 140.
26. Browne, pp. 28-9.
27. Tonndorf, p. 9.
28. 'Kinge and Miller', *Percy's Folio Manuscript*, II, 147-57.
29. In discussing popular ballads J. F. Campbell refers to 'The King and the Miller of Mansfield', saying: 'The story of that ballad is very widely spread. Sir Walter Scott tells it as Scotch history in the *Tales of a Grandfather*. I have something very like it in Gaelic. The adventure savours of Haroun of Raschid wandering in disguise, and Percy gives a whole list of similar songs and stories, . . . ' *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, trans. J.(ohn) F.(rancis) Campbell (Edinburgh, 1862), IV, p. 124.
30. For information about this tale I am indebted to an unpublished article by Joseph Harris, 'An International Popular Tale in Two Old Icelandic Adaptions', (Ithaca, 1972) pp. 16-17. The Scandinavian text may be found in *Islensk fornrit* 11 (Reykjavik, 1950), pp. 330-3. See also Harris: 'The King and the Iclander: A study in the Short Narrative Forms of Old Icelandic Prose', *Diss. Harvard*, 1969.
31. *Westlawischer Märchenschatz*, ed. Joseph Wenzig (Leipzig, 1857), p. 179.
32. 'Kaiser Karl', *Die Sagen Belgiens*, ed. Maria von Ploennies (Köln, 1846), pp. 241-53.
33. 'Brot und Salz Segnet Gott', *Deutsche Sagen*, ed. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (Berlin, 1818, 4th ed., 1905), No. 566.
34. Smyser, 145.
35. Janet M. Smith, *The French Background of Middle Scots Literature* (Edinburgh, 1934), p. 21; Smyser, 145.
36. *Amours*, p. xxxix.
37. Paul-Yves Sébillot, *Le Folklore de la Bretagne* (Paris, 1968), I, p. 289.
38. Monsieur de Fabert, *L'Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne* (Cologne, 1687), pp. 241-2.

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39. On p. 139 of his article on the sources of *Rauf Coilyear* Professor Smyser alludes to a story (not seen by him) of Henry of Navarre published in *Guirlande des Marguérites* (Nérac 1876). This book, which can be found in the Bibliothèque Nationale, is a collection of sonnets dedicated to the city of Nérac. Sonnet No. 37 is entitled 'Familiarités du Roi Henri' and concerns an encounter between the king (1589-1610) and a bourgeois named Lespiault. Seeing the man eating a chunk of bread rubbed with garlic and salt, the king makes a remark the gist of which is: 'That's good enough for the likes of you.' No mention of disguise is made.

40. Kenneth W. Clarke, *Uncle Bud Long: the Birth of a Kentucky Folk Legend* (University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, Kentucky, 1973), p. 69.

41. In his discussion of the formula Professor Lord suggests a likely explanation for the existence of 'alliterative tags' and stock phrases. 'It is certainly possible that a formula that entered the poetry because its acoustic patterns emphasized by repetition a potent word or idea was kept after the peculiar potency which it symbolized and which one might say even was intended to make effective was lost — kept because the fragrance of its past importance still clung vaguely to it and kept also because it was now useful in composition. It is then that the repeated phrases, hitherto a driving force in the direction of accomplishment of those blessings to be conferred by the story in song, began to lose their precision through frequent use. Meaning in them became vestigial, . . .' Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 65.

42. B. J. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases* (Cambridge, Mass. 1968).

43. *Ibid.*

44. 'Mahmūd of Ghazni and the Fisherman', *Hatim's Tales: Kashmiri Stories and Songs*, recorded by Sir Aurel Stein, ed. and trans. Sir George A. Grierson (London, 1923), p. 3.

45. 'The Four Good Maxims' and 'The Six Good Maxims', Pandit S. M. Natesa Sastri, *Indian Folk Tales* (Madras, 1908), pp. 303-34.